



Corrections

Date: December 20, 2018

Subject: Wilkinson County Correctional Facility Comprehensive Audit

To: Jodie Bradley, Warden

Copy: Sara Revell, Region IV Vice President

From: D. Scott Dodrill, Audit Team Leader

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The prevalence of not only STG activity, but staff's tolerance of it, cannot be understated. Gang graffiti is evident throughout the facility. STG leaders are surrounded by their "security" at all times; outside their cell door, while they are showering and anywhere they go. Audit team members observed certain inmates being 'escorted/protected' as they went from shower to cell and vice versa. Numerous inmates were observed wearing their pants inside out.

Customer SOP 16.19.01 specifically requires management of an institution "from a position of strength to ensure Zero Tolerance for STG activities" and "Refuse to acknowledge or give status/attention to offenders as STG members". Multiple interviews with inmates reveal that STG leaders control who gets jobs and other preferential treatment. During the audit in-brief, the audit team was told by the Warden that the head of MDOC CID (Criminal Investigation Division) has stated there needs to be more working with the STG leaders so they can better control their members, or something to that effect. The Warden said he agreed with this approach and that the "old school" ways are some of the most effective. It is imperative that the facility does not allow STG activity to occur freely or without consequence, much less condone or encourage it by "working" with STG leaders, thereby empowering them.

Other auditors noted that during the audit it never felt like staff were in control of the offender population. It was evident from observations and interviews that staff do not enforce rules or perform routine duties consistently.

Another auditor similarly reported the Warden's style of managing high-risk populations and provided important insight into the ramifications of this approach:

- Warden stated that he speaks with the gang lords/leaders and asks them to "control their men." If they do not control the individuals on the unit, the Warden will place the unit on lockdown. The Warden said that is how Mississippi prisons operate – "It ain't right, but's it's the truth." (Quote from the Warden).

This is problematic for several reasons. First, the Warden is punishing an entire unit if "the gang leaders" were unable to manage their groups. This is not an effective method of influencing compliance as this strategy can cause individuals to act out in frustration because they were not breaking the rules. Second, the Warden is giving some power and control to these individuals and asking these individuals to have some form of informal social control. When inmates exert power over other inmates, they can use this to coerce, manipulate, control, or threaten individuals to get what they want and satisfy their own needs. Not only does this have safety implications but it is not conducive to a healthy, pro-social environment and can interfere with rehabilitative efforts. Gang leaders will reinforce behaviors they value – these behaviors are most likely antisocial and criminal. Third, the gang leaders that the Warden



is placing in control of groups of individuals could decide they want something in return from staff. Ultimately, this can lead to staff compromise, corruption, and inappropriate relations between staff and inmates.

It is equally important to consider the population at Wilkinson as well. It is a medium to maximum-security prison housing many high-risk inmates. Prior research documents that higher security facilities (i.e., those housing higher risk inmates) are associated with higher levels of institutional misconduct and violence. Furthermore, the facility has a high rate of vacancies at any given time, which impacts the safety of the institution when those security positions are not filled. Inmates are in the facility 24/7. They are aware of everything that is going on, or not going on, in the institution and will use it to their advantage.